

necessary step have been taken. Presumably not any long time before the sitting. Crookes records that for an hour before the sitting Mrs Fay was in the drawing-room upstairs, 'in the presence of several witnesses', she then being invited down into the library for the test. Thus, it would seem she could only have introduced the material soaked in electrolyte when she was in the library, and in the presence of the investigators (since, in one way or another, the circuit was closed before they left the room); this certainly seems to present a difficulty. Perhaps one might postulate that Mrs Fay requested 'to be excused' immediately before the sitting and Crookes omitted to record this, though if she made a habit of so doing before all the sittings one might imagine that he would have become suspicious.

We would not make much of a difficulty of the obvious requirement for a suitably skilled person to coach Eva Fay, since electrical skill was no rare thing at that time. In the immediate circle, one has only to point to Harrison. But we are impressed (though some experienced investigators, such as Dr Dingwall, would not support us here) by the failure of observers of the calibre of Galton and Rayleigh to notice anything suspicious. Trickery of the kind postulated *must* have involved carelessness on the part of the observers. It must always be borne in mind that some were suspicious of mediumship generally, and one, at least, of this particular medium and even of Crookes himself. And yet we are to suppose that they all failed, at the critical point of the experiment, to satisfy themselves that Mrs Fay had really grasped the handles. We find even more difficulty in supposing that a man of the penetrating intelligence of Lord Rayleigh, with many subsequent years to reflect on this experiment, should never have noticed the loophole, now so obvious to us, which would have been left if he had been guilty of such gross mal-observation. Nevertheless, one cannot but agree that the implications, if fraud were *not* practised, are so momentous that difficulties of this kind have less weight than they would in other circumstances.

R. G. MEDHURST

K. M. GOLDNEY

### *Harry Price and the 'Rosalie' case*

SIR,—The serious nature of the complaints recently made in this Journal concerning the methods of criticism employed by Mr Trevor Hall in his book *The Spiritualists*, must surely call into question some of this writer's previous work, notably his share in

the posthumous criticisms of the late Harry Price—both those concerning Borley Rectory which appeared under the auspices of this Society, and those concerning the 'Rosalie' case which were published independently.

In regard to the latter, I attempted, in 1958, to call attention in these pages to what appeared to be a very blatant, and very serious piece of misrepresentation. In a letter addressed to you as Editor, I wrote:

SIR,—Writing of the Rosalie case in their book *Four Modern Ghosts*, Dr E. J. Dingwall and Mr T. H. Hall state that Mrs Goldney, after a long search among Price's papers was unable to find any documents capable of identifying the house or locality in which this séance was supposed to have been held. But, they go on to say (p. 61), 'We were more fortunate at a later stage. Mr J. H. P. Pafford, the Goldsmiths' Librarian of the University of London, found the correspondence which proved positively that Price had revealed that the séance was at Brockley and kindly copied it for us'.

This correspondence is not quoted in *Four Modern Ghosts*, and as no reference is given by which it can be identified, the reader is left in the unsatisfactory position of having to take it on trust that it really does 'prove positively' what the authors claim that it proves. As it is hardly necessary to say, this matter is of fundamental importance to the authors' arguments; for unless it can be shewn satisfactorily that Price had revealed that the séance was at Brockley, their laborious field-work, as a result of which it appears that no house exists at Brockley which is capable of fitting all the details of Price's description, is entirely beside the point. And further, there would be little or nothing of a factual nature to support the authors' suggestion that Price had fabricated this story for the purpose of providing a sensational chapter for his book, *Fifty Years of Psychical Research*, then in the course of preparation.

The present writer felt that he would like to be satisfied about this. He called at the Goldsmiths' Library, and asked to be allowed to see the correspondence referred to. He was informed that only *one* letter from Price's files in connection with the locality of the 'Rosalie' séance had been copied and sent to the authors, but he was told that some cuttings from periodicals had also been copied and sent.

The letter in question was produced. It was undated, and he was astonished to see that it did not specifically mention the 'Rosalie' case. It appeared to be concerned with the Bill for the Regulation of Psychic Practices which Price had at one time hoped to get introduced into Parliament, and contained the sentence:

'Surely the people at Brockley when they know the lengths you are going to stabilise this subject will help you, especially if they are people of culture.'

It need hardly be said that this reference to 'people at Brockley' might mean anything at all. As the authors have mentioned in their book, Price had once *lived* at Brockley, and his wife had lived there too. It is,

therefore to be expected that he would know many people in that district.

Nor did any of the cuttings from periodicals seen by the present writer throw further light on the locality of the séance, but of course, these might not have been the same as those that were copied and sent to the authors. Precise information about this could not be given to the present writer by the Goldsmiths' Librarian; and an enquiry addressed to the authors failed to elicit any information beyond the fact that they had nothing to add to what they printed on page 61 of their book, which they considered to be 'clear and unambiguous' . . .

For the reason, presumably, that *Four Modern Ghosts* had not been published under the auspices of this Society, space could not be found to print my letter in the *Journal*. But as an alternative, you very kindly offered to send a copy of it to Dr Dingwall in case he might like to reply to me direct. I confess that I was not entirely happy about this, but I referred it to the President of our Society, then Professor C. D. Broad, who advised me to accept your offer to send the letter to Dr Dingwall for his comments, adding, 'It would be interesting to hear what (if anything) he has to say in reply. And it would be of some significance, if he should decline to reply at all.'

Dr Dingwall did not reply, either at that time, or some six months later when, at my request, you sent him a reminder. And there, for the time being, the matter had to be left, for Mr Hall had already closed his side of the correspondence and there seemed to be little more that I could do, especially as I do not live in London.

The matter had, however, become known to one or two members. After the Annual General Meeting in 1962, Dr Dingwall, in the presence of witnesses, which included a Council member, was asked for an explanation. He admitted that the letter quoted above was the one referred to in *Four Modern Ghosts*, that it did not 'prove positively' that the 'Rosalie' seance was at Brockley, and added, 'I told Trevor he was claiming too much, but it is too late to do anything about it now'.

In view of the apparent gravity of these matters, and the possibility of serious implications for psychical research generally, may I request that you will now allow these matters to be ventilated in this *Journal*. I would add that in recent years I have investigated all the allegations made posthumously against the late Harry Price, including those published under the auspices of this Society. Wherever possible, I have consulted original source material, and I have also made a few independent enquiries. I have found little or no substance in any of the allegations. If facilities, so far denied, could be made available in the S.P.R.

publications or elsewhere, I would be happy to write as a spokesman for Price's defence.

R. J. HASTINGS

*Crookes and the Physical Phenomena of Mediumship*

SIR,—In April 1875 (*Spiritualist*, 23 April, 1875) Serjeant Cox announced the Council for his newly-formed Psychological Society. Attending Council's first meeting were Myers and Crookes. On Page 70 of the current *Proceedings* the authors mention the former's work with Florence Cook and Mrs Fay. If Myers continued his inquiries into physical phenomena after January 1875 it is possible, through his association with Crookes and Cox, that he sat at the later 'Leila' seances. Though Cox had had a brief 'break' with Crookes over the joint sittings of Florence Cook and Mary Showers, they were both reconciled at the time of the Fay inquiries.

The break with Crookes now healed did not stop Serjeant Cox from attending a reception given by Mrs Guppy for the American medium Mrs Hardy. This took place on August 6, 1875. Mrs Guppy's part in the activities of Volckman, who had brought about an earlier alleged 'exposure' of Florence Cook, were well known. She later married Volckman. It is believed that she had attempted a violent assault on Florence Cook, a medium she envied and loathed. At this particular reception was Mrs Ross-Church, whose praise of Florence Cook is excessive in the extreme. It is ironical, however, that Mrs Ross-Church and Cox attended a reception given by Mrs Guppy, from which Crookes had been excluded, in particular since Mrs Guppy's reputation was more than dubious.

At this period Miss Showers was continuing her seances even though Cox's 'exposure' at his home a year or so earlier could hardly have been forgotten. Apparently, Cox's position was now changed. His approval of Mrs Fay, his consorting with a friend of Miss Cook (i.e. Mrs Ross-Church), enabled him to return as a welcome visitor to Spiritualist circles. In August 1875 Florence Cook was still in poor health and holidaying in the South of France. These dates are of some significance as is the behaviour of Crookes at this time.

Toward the end of 1875 the Showers 'exposure', as seen from the correspondence between Home and Crookes, forced Crookes to withdraw from his inquiries into mediumship. We know that Miss Showers, later Mrs Nugent James, continued her mediumship without difficulties. The Cox 'exposure' had left little mark.